

DMM Safety Alert: Heat Stress

Although the numbers vary widely from year to year, on average, over 300 people nationwide die each year from heat related illnesses. When the body can no longer adequately cool itself by sweating, heat exhaustion and the much more serious heat stroke can occur and can result in death. Prolonged exposure to high temperature and humidity, direct sun or heat, limited air movement, physical exertion, some medications and poor physical condition can lead to these conditions.

Symptoms

Heat Exhaustion:

- Fatigue, thirst and heavy sweating.
- Headache, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting.
- Cramps, nausea and vomiting.

Heat Stroke:

- Dry, hot skin with no sweating.
- Fast breathing, headache, dizziness and confusion.
- Irrational behavior, convulsions and loss of consciousness.

What To Do

- Move the person out of the heat to a cool place to rest. Loosen or remove outer layer of clothing.
- Raise the legs 8 to 12 inches and give them a sports drink or water. **NO CAFFEINATED OR ALCOHOLIC DRINKS!**
- Cool the person with cold, wet cloths to the forehead and body.

For Heatstroke:

- **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!** After removing outer clothing, cool the person as quickly as possible by spraying or sponging with cold water and applying ice bags or cold packs to the neck, armpits and groin. Do not give liquids if nauseous or vomiting.

Prevention

Know the signs and symptoms of heat stress and monitor yourself and those around you. When working in hot environments, rest regularly and drink lots of water (a cup every 15 or 20 minutes). During work, avoid alcoholic and caffeinated drinks, eat lightly and wear light, loose fitting clothing.

